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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE  
NSC FOR BRAUN  
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI  
EUR/ACE FOR DROGERS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)  
SUBJECT: FUNDING FOR MISSING PERSONS AND FORENSICS IN KOSOVO

REF: A. PRISTINA 461

- [1](#)B. 04 PRISTINA 965
- [1](#)C. PRISTINA 265

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. As the recent confrontation between police and families of the missing in Krushe e Vogel/Mala Krusa demonstrates, missing persons remains a volatile issue in Kosovo (Ref A). The USG has helped fund both UNMIK's Office of Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF) and the Kosovo operations of the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), and 1490 sets of human remains have been found, identified and returned to families. However, known gravesites are nearly exhausted and leads on new sites hard to come by. We have clearly hit a point of diminishing returns regarding recovery of remains, although results could yet improve should OMPF and ICMP manage to overcome past difficulties and work in concert. END SUMMARY.

MISSING PERSONS: STILL A MAJOR PROBLEM IN KOSOVO  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) According to witness accounts, the May 25 confrontation between residents and police in Krushe e Vogel/Mala Krusa started because the Kosovo Albanian villagers thought they saw former Kosovo Serb neighbors in an UNMIK convoy, and wanted to ask them about the whereabouts of their missing relatives (Ref A). Uncertainty about the fate of missing persons remains a source of anguish to their families.

[1](#)3. (SBU) UNMIK's Office of Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF) and the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) agree that there are significant numbers of people still missing from the Kosovo conflict. According to OMPF statistics, the number of unresolved missing persons cases has fallen from 5288 in 2002, when OMPF was created, to 2406

as of May 2006. Of those still missing, OMPF estimates that 1719 are Kosovo Albanians, 503 Kosovo Serbs and 182 are other minorities.

#### BACKGROUND

¶4. (SBU) OMPF, under UNMIK's Department of Justice (DOJ), has jurisdiction over missing persons cases as well as all criminal forensic investigations. OMPF gathers leads and investigates possible gravesites, conducts exhumations and autopsies, transfers bone samples to ICMP for DNA extraction and identification, repatriates bodies to families once they are identified and keeps family members informed about the process (Ref B). Under ICMP's 2003 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with OMPF, ICMP collects blood samples from family members of the missing, and conducts DNA analysis of bone samples to make identification matches.

#### RUNNING OUT OF KNOWN GRAVESITES

¶5. (SBU) Acting OMPF director Valerie Brasey told E/P Chief, PolOff and PolFSN on May 24 that apart from one site in Gjilan/Gniljane that is almost ready for exhumation (pending final witness site identification and a court order), OMPF has exhausted all known sites in Kosovo. OMPF field operations (including all exhumations and assessments) are on the decline, from 174 in 2002 to 61 in 2005. Similarly, the number of sets of human remains recovered annually from within Kosovo has fallen from 443 in 2002 to 118 in 2005.

#### CONTINUED SLOW PROGRESS ON IDENTIFICATIONS

¶6. (SBU) Brasey said that so far in 2006 OMPF has received 238 identification matches back from ICMP, including 100

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matches for remains stored in the OMPF's morgue in Rahovec/Orahovac. (NOTE. OMPF recently opened a new facility in Pristina, and is in the process of transferring its staff, operations and mortal remains. END NOTE.) She said OMPF has custody of approximately 700 sets of unidentified remains. ICMP has extracted DNA from 500 of them, but has not found matches in its existing blood database. The remaining 200 are either burned or deteriorated to the extent that ICMP cannot extract DNA.

¶7. (SBU) If a DNA sample does not come up with a match in the database, it means that the family members did not donate blood. OMPF and ICMP agree this could be because the entire family was killed, or they fled Kosovo and not been found, or because they received a body which they think is their loved one, but may have been mis-identified in the chaos immediately after the conflict. Every such mix-up means there is one body that cannot be identified in the morgue, and another family cannot find their loved one, who is buried under another name.

#### TRANSFERS FROM SERBIA WILL FINISH THIS MONTH

¶8. (SBU) As of December 2005, the Serbian government had returned 679 sets of remains from mass graves in Serbia. Brasey said Serbia agreed to transfer the remaining sets of remains (approximately 70) by the end of June, which OMPF will then need to sort, autopsy and identify. She said it is impossible to predict the exact number, due to the condition of some of the remains. For example, Brasey said the femur of the son-in-law of Nesrete Kumnova, head of the Provisional Institutions of Self Government's commission on the missing, was identified among bodies Serbia recently returned, but the rest of his body is still missing.

OMPF WANTS 200,000 EUROS FOR OPERATIONS AND TRAINING

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¶9. (SBU) On May 24 OMPF presented USOP with a proposal requesting 200,000 euros, half for exhumation and mortuary operations, and half to train local staff. (NOTE. USOP has faxed the proposal to EUR/ACE. END NOTE.) The USG gave OMPF 300,000 USD in 2005 to fund exhumations, and the money resulted in some major breakthroughs. OMPF has used the funds frugally, maintaining a roster of qualified international doctors and specialists to bring to Kosovo as needed. No USG funding is expressly earmarked for OMPF for 2006 or 2007, although post would like to consider meeting OMPF's request out of available discretionary funds.

¶10. (SBU) Brasey said OMPF recently downsized its international staff from 15 to 10, and is transferring competencies to local staff. She said OMPF is training some of the staff from Kosovo's pre-existing Forensic Institute (under the Department of Health); and is considering a possible merger with the institute if technical standards there can be brought up to acceptable levels. She said OMPF hired two of the institute's doctors and put them through a one-year post-graduate diploma program in forensic medicine, but then had to fire one of them (along with a local UNMIK-trained forensics practitioner) over slander allegations against OMPF that the UN determined to be unfounded. Brasey said six more doctors are currently in the post-grad program, and OMPF will hire three of them after they graduate in September.

ICMP: FINISHING ITS MANDATE, WANTS TO DO MORE

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¶11. (SBU) ICMP has requested USD 650,000 in FY 2006 to fund ongoing expenses, including local salaries, transportation, heavy equipment rental, international forensic expertise, blood collection and civil society outreach. In a March 15 email, Kathryn Bomberger, ICMP chief of staff, told PolOff

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that ICMP will complete blood collection this year, and has already analyzed over 96% of the bone samples it has received from OMPF. She said ICMP has proposed amendments to the MOU to allow it to play a greater role in locating and exhuming gravesites and in local political capacity building (Ref C).

¶12. (SBU) In a May 25 meeting with RLA, E/P Chief and PolOff, UNMIK/DOJ Chief Al Moskowitz said he understood that OMPF and ICMP have not worked well together in the past, but said all that occurred long before his arrival in Kosovo. He said he works closely with OMPF, has never heard from ICMP, and is open to considering any joint efforts the organizations develop.

ICMP PROPOSALS FOR NEXT STEPS

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¶13. (SBU) Bomberger told PolOff that during a June 1 meeting she and Moskowitz discussed practical solutions to resolving cases and determining areas where ICMP and OMPF can work together. In response to his concern about whether ICMP data can be used as evidence in war crimes prosecutions, she said DNA match reports can be used in court, but ICMP can only reveal the identity of blood donors if the donor signs a waiver (which ICMP can help obtain). She said Moskowitz proposed further discussions directly between ICMP and OMPF, and he agreed to visit the ICMP headquarters and facilities in Bosnia.

¶14. (SBU) Bomberger said ICMP, OMPF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which chairs the Kosovo working group on missing persons, should develop a joint approach to resolving missing persons cases. She suggested other activities might include obtaining and reviewing war crimes investigation files from the ICTY, civil police and national KFOR contingents; establishing an anonymous hotline

to gather leads accompanied by a public information campaign to publicize the hotline; and creating a high-level multiethnic commission that would report directly to the prime minister. She said the commission, like the new Missing Persons Institute in Bosnia, must be able to credibly represent victims families of all ethnicities, and serve as a long-term archive of information related to cases. She said pre-existing satellite imagery taken by NATO immediately after the war could be analyzed in conjunction with reliable witness information to detect land disturbances, but said this would not be as useful as it was in Bosnia since the gravesites are smaller.

¶15. (SBU) Bomberger said ICMP, OMPF and ICRC all have slightly different lists of missing persons, and these should be compiled into one definitive list. She said ICMP, OMPF and ICRC should decide jointly about the extremely sensitive issue of whether to approach families who might have buried mis-identified victims.

ICMP AND OMPF AGREE INFORMATION IS NEEDED TO FIND NEW SITES  
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¶16. Despite past disagreements and personal animosities, ICMP and OMPF have the same objective: to resolve outstanding cases and thereby bring much needed closure to the families. Bomberger and OMPF head Jose Pablo Baraybar both have said the best way to find more bodies is to obtain information from the parties to the conflict and from the ICTY, KFOR, individual NATO military contingents, and the OSCE - who ICMP and OMPF believe have information in their files about the location of bodies that were buried or exhumed during the collection of evidence for war crimes in the immediate post-war period.

COMMENT  
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¶17. (SBU) OMPF's request for an additional 200,000 euros is a  
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reasonable one, and the funding could again be earmarked to focus specifically on exhumations. ICMP's latest proposals for activities such as political capacity building, working with family members and gathering leads complements rather than obstructs OMPF's more technical work of exhumations, and could be carried out without amending the MOU. However, ICMP would be hard-pressed to spend all of its money on such activities. END COMMENT.

¶18. (U) Post clears this message in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Ahtisaari.  
GOLDBERG